1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11

XXXV

THE TALENSE (*continued*)

Property and Inheritance. Particular Significance of Certain Relationship Terms. Rites de Passage. Shrines. Soothsayers

428 PROPERTY *and Inheritance:* The rules already given in Chapter XXII for the devolution of private, family, and ancestral property apply equally here. I noted, however, in many cases, deliberate attempts to mislead the enquirer, being repeatedly told that the son succeeds to his father's property to the exclusion of the brother. In every case where such a statement was made it was found that the wish was father of the thought, and that in no case was such succession in conformity with Native customary law. In one of the histories recorded in the previous chapter it will be noted that a son succeeded his father, but this was only due to the coincidence that when *Misore* was driven away from Mampruse he was not accompanied by any of his brothers. The real facts are, that, where there are no brothers, the eldest 'son,' not necessarily of the deceased—he may be son of deceased's brother—succeeds.

582 *Particular Significance of Certain Relationship Terms*: No new facts were disclosed which have not already been discussed, save in connexion with the marriage avoidances relating to cross-cousins.[1] With regard to these, the following, perhaps ingenious rather than convincing, excuse was given for the prevalent dislike for such unions.

582 'If you married your mother's brother's daughter, and quarrelled about the cows paid to your *abeŋ* or *asen* (maternal uncle, Nankane
●586 *asiba*) for *sull*, (Nankane, *sulle*), this would lead to trouble. Suppose you quarrelled with your wife after marriage and she returned to her father, who is your maternal uncle, you would ask him to return the cows. Should he not do so, you would be entitled to seize cows belonging to any person from his, that is from your own mother's, town; you would descend into the valley (*sig boog nwoy nigi*; Nankane, *sig boo nyoge*). After doing so you could no longer perform sacrifices to your mother or to her mother; you would not sleep; your children would die, and your uncle would also suffer.'

Marriage with Father's Sister's Daughter: A somewhat similar explanation was given for this avoidance. 'You cannot marry her because

[1] See p. 4.

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11

of the cows. If she went back home you would claim the cows back from her father, who is your own "father," and this would interfere with the sacrifices to your father and father's father.'

Marriage Customs: These appear to be almost identical with those of the Nankanse, as will be seen from the following: The suitor approaches the father of the girl, who refers him to his eldest brother, or father, if alive. The suitor brings tobacco to the girl's father and mother; they show these gifts to the head of the compound. Three or four days later the suitor will bring a dead guinea-fowl and give it to his future mother-in-law. This gift is called *pɔ-bore-bono* (something with which to seek a wife). Later, the suitor will send a live fowl and guinea-fowl and corn by a messenger known as *aben* (*isiga* in Nankane). These offerings will be given to the girl's *seyr* (guardian spirit) by the head of her house, who will say: 'Receive these things; the girl has reached puberty; she is ready to go to her husband; the day they bore her, they gave her to you.' The girl now goes to the bridegroom's town, to the compound of the *aben* (who is a son of a woman who came from the bride's town). There she remains three days, after which she goes to her husband. Sometimes the cows have to be paid before the girl leaves her father's compound; they are then known as *lay bo* (*leka* in Nankane). Sometimes they are paid long after marriage and are then called *sull' bono*. After the bride has gone to her husband's compound, her brothers will go there, and her husband will kill a dog for them, and a fowl and some goats. After they have returned home, the bridegroom will send the *aben* with a live cock to the section-head who is 'half-brother' to the head of the section to which the bride belongs, and also a dead guinea-fowl to the bride's mother. These gifts are called *sandan* (compare Nankane *sandono*). Without this formality the marriage is not legal, however many cows are paid, nor may the husband claim adultery damages. This gift is to obtain a witness. If the woman later leaves her husband, the same *aben* will claim back the cows.

Funeral Customs: The following account of a Talense funeral was given me by the *Ten'dan*' of Tongo:

'When a man dies I have to make the grave.' (This is not to be taken literally; he will be represented by a brother or son.) 'I go to the spot with ashes in a red pot and mark out the grave in a circle. I then dig a little and hand the axe (*lebo*) to the *bayas* (sextons) and they continue to dig the grave (*yeog*'). I then begin to sacrifice. The *kunran* (the person in charge of the funeral custom) gives me a fowl (not a

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11
Kusase

deceased's senior wife (the eldest son's maternal uncle) because a man's senior wife owns the compound and has all the work of building it up. During a man's lifetime, the eldest son may not look into his father's bag or into his grain-store, or make use of anything personally used by his father.'[1]

Widows and Children: 'Widows go to the heir, but if he does not want them, they will know this, and already have spoken to the men whom they wish to marry. Before their heads have been shaved, they must not on any account have sexual intercourse with any one. Any man who is guilty of doing so, is said "to have cut the widows' strings" (*okoa pɔkɔ nwis*) and any infant whom such an adulterer looks upon will die. These widows' strings are made by an old woman who has ceased to bear children, and, after the funeral custom, she will cut them. After this they will appear in fresh leaves and people will know they are eligible to remarry. They will marry a clansman, not some one from another town. A son may not marry any of his father's widows if the father has ever had sexual intercourse with them. The deceased's brother, if not a *nyere*, may do so. The leaves which widows wear are *tanpiba* leaves (shea butter leaves). If a wife ever puts these on (during his lifetime) her husband will divorce her, and claim back the cows.[2]

'If the widow goes outside the clan of the late husband to marry, the heir will claim from her parents the cows paid, but deducting one cow for each child borne by her. Her father in turn will recover these cows from the man whom she then marries. The children then remain with the late husband's family. Should all the cows not have been paid when the first husband died, the heir, or whichever of the clansmen take her, have to pay the balance due, otherwise no new payments are necessary. It is taboo for the heir to take for himself two widows of the same man. He chooses which he will have and gives the other to his brother, that is, if these persons want them, otherwise they may marry a clansman.' Other customs in connexion with widows and the funeral custom will be dealt with under that heading.

Children: 'The children of the deceased belong to his fellow clansman who marries the widow, but across the Volta, among the Kusase whom we call the people of the West (*Toondem*), children of widows belong to the ghost (i.e. the late husband). If the widow marries outside her late husband's clan, any children she had by her first husband remain the property of his clansman, i.e. of the heir.'

[1] Compare the Nankanse.

[2] Compare Nankanse custom.

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11
Kusase

Five to six months after birth

the infant will be named. A soothsayer may tell the father that a certain *Wen* (Nankane *Yini*), either his own, his father's, or grandfather's, wants the child as its *segr* (Nankane *segere*). The father will then take flour-water and a fowl and a guinea-fowl and offer them on that shrine, and after doing so, give the child some of the flour-water to drink. When sacrificing, he will speak as follows:

'"Here is an infant which I have begotten; you have said you want it; do not let a hawk (a witch) catch it; guard it well; if it grows and lives and walks by itself, I will give you a beast." After the infant has been given the flour-water to drink, the mother holds it and the father will name it after the object which is the abode of the spirit in the shrine, the *baya* (bangle) or whatever it may be, the infant's hand touching this thing while he names it.

'Later, the mother of the mother of the infant will ask that her daughter and grandchild may visit them, and, if the soothsayer says that they may do so, they will go to her for from three to five months.

'A man does not cohabit with his wife for two to three years, or even more, after she has borne a child; it depends on how soon the child is walking about. A child born with any teeth was formerly killed. Twins (*Ki kiris*) which die as infants are considered to have been fairies and are buried in the bush. A dead infant is buried in an ordinary grave near a path, a piece of potsherd being placed over the ear to keep out earth, the grave being filled in and a stone put on top to mark the place. "It is buried near a path so that it may find its way back to the compound for food; if it were buried far away in the bush it would get lost." A stillborn child, if formed, is buried as described above; if not formed, it is put in a pot and buried on the kitchen midden. A woman who dies in childbirth is not given a funeral custom; she is buried in the bush in an oblong-shaped grave which is then filled in. The husband will bathe for three days with leaves and the third day will shave his head. "The reason that the woman is buried far away is because, the husband if he saw her grave would die, and if he took part in any funeral custom for her he would die."'

Kusase Marriage Customs:

'If a man has already paid cows and discovers later that his wife is barren, he cannot claim them back. If, however, he has not yet paid them, he may then refuse to give them, in which case her father may take her away, but even then she may run back to her husband.'

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

The Chain of Sub-clans

[618] [613] Thus came into being this chain of four patrilineal sub-clans (Tongo, Yamaləg, Sie, and Biuk), each the skeleton of a community. From these primary nuclei colonies have continually hived off to settle in neighbouring areas, particularly at Gbambee, Gorogo, Ba'ari, Woo, and Datɔk. Each sub-clan is itself a composite system of lineages: authentic lineages constituted by the direct line of agnatic descent from the clan founder, Mosuor; attached lineages, linked to these usually by the dogma of [611] sister-descent; and assimilated lineages. The attached lineages are identified as *ti tau biis*—our sister's children—descendants in the direct male line of a female member of one of the authentic lineages. The stereotyped formula attributes the origin of such a lineage either to a sister's son (*ahɔŋ*) who came to live in his mother's brother's (*ahɔb*)

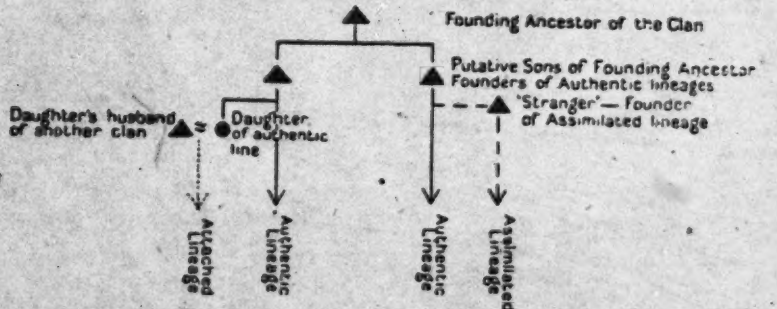

Diagram showing Relationship of Accessory Lineages to Authentic Line

[586] community, or to a sister who was divorced by her husband by the irrevocable procedure of blowing ash on her (*pɛbh*), and returned to the shelter of her parental home with her children. By this form of divorce a man renounces his rights in his children, who henceforth become members of their maternal lineage, as if they had been illegitimately begotten by a lover. The agnatic posterity of such children, as of any spinster's son, becomes a lineage attached to that of their ancestor's mother.

We shall call these 'attached lineages' because they are linked to the authentic lineages by actual or putative cognatic ties. An attached lineage maintains its continuity and distinctness, like any other lineage, even if its patrilineal progenitor is alleged to have repudiated its ancestress and his own progeny.

The existence of the assimilated lineages is often traced to an ancestor who was a 'kinsman' (*mabii*) accompanying the founder of the authentic lineage when he first arrived. Of some such lineages, however, it is whispered that they sprang from slaves of the authentic lineage with which they are connected, or from foreign refugees who sought their protection. The term used for these lineages is intended to convey that they are incorporated in the sub-clan by virtue of their dependence on and participation in the life of an authentic lineage. We shall also describe these two kinds of lineages collectively as accessory lineages.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

606 611 602 this son-in-law from his other sons-in-law, both because this young man was the husband of his own daughter, whereas the others were the husbands of his dead brothers' daughters, and because this son-in-law was as devoted to him as his own sons. Tallensi often say that a man's own children are virtually his *saarət*, though not technically so. There is no confusion in the native mind about these usages of the concept of *soog*; they understand and explain clearly that these are metaphorical usages.

835 The feeling of close, personal intimacy in the relationship of uterine kin is best brought out in the native attitude about sexual relations between *saarət*. It is incestuous if the couple know they are *saarət*, however distant their uterine connexion. It is like incest between own brother and sister, and is viewed in the same way as the latter. Tallensi think of it with disgust rather than horror. Sexual desire for a known *soog* relative is so utterly inconsistent with the general attitude of uterine kin towards each other that it is unthinkable in a decent person. It is a taboo (*kihər*) which normal people take for granted. There are no ritual or jural sanctions against incest with a *soog*, and Tallensi would say that there is no need for them. At no point are the relations of uterine kin subject to sanctions; 'I will not refuse him, I will not deny him anything', says the native of a *soog*, thinking of this as an axiomatic feature of *soog* kinship.

582 602 Marriage between *saarət* is, of course, forbidden, and the elders of the lineages concerned would never allow it if the couple are known to be uterine kin. But sometimes, owing to the devious ramifications of uterine kinship, a married couple discover that they are distant *saarət*. [586] If there are no children, or the elders of the girl's lineage want a pretext for taking her from her husband, they might insist on the dissolution of the marriage. If a child has been born, or the couple refuse to part for any other reason, their kinship must be ritually severed. The rite is very simple. The essential act consists of the husband and wife grasping a calabash with one hand each and wrenching it in halves. This symbolizes the splitting (*bək*) of their kinship.

602 It is not uncommon for a man to have one or more *saarət* (other than his siblings) among the members of his own clan. They may be the sons of one mother by different fathers, or the sons of sisters, or of more distantly related uterine kinswomen who married into the same clan. In such cases one can see how the loyalties based on uterine kinship are distinguished from the ties of lineage membership. Yikpɛmdaan and Tinta'alɔm of Tɔŋ-Kuorɔg, the two senior elders of Kuorɔg section, are *saarət*, but members of different segments of the section. Tinta'alɔm's children and brothers' children speak of Yikpɛmdaan as their father (*ba*); Yikpɛmdaan and Tinta'alɔm speak of each other as brothers, since their mothers were full sisters. Their mutual affection and attachment, going back to the childhood of Yikpɛmdaan, when he lived for a time with Tinta'alɔm, are well known. Tinta'alɔm

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

581 595 622 or headman or important elder, backed as it often is by lavish gifts to her parents, security of the bride-price, and the attraction of his wealth and power or status. Few parents would hesitate to force their daughter to accept such an offer. Chiefs and headmen do in fact have an excessive number of wives. The five biggest chiefs and headmen of the Tongo district had between them about 160 wives of all ages in 1936. Their predecessors of a generation ago would have had perhaps 30 between them, at the utmost. The extra 130 wives they have means that probably 100 other men have been cheated of wives. This has no doubt diminished the chances of early marriage for a proportion of young men, but not so greatly as the men assert. All the evidence of Tale domestic institutions and of Tale genealogies goes to show that wives were always highly prized because they were always at a premium.[1] In consequence, no unmarried girl or woman of child-bearing age lacks suitors, and no wife of child-bearing age need endure an intolerable marriage. She can always find another husband. That women take advantage of their scarcity value is what one would expect; but they do so to a smaller extent than one anticipates. This is due partly to the strength and stability of the patrilineal lineage system, expressed in inter-personal relations in the power of the *patria potestas*, and partly to the great value women set upon wifehood and motherhood. Life is a failure to a Tale woman who never becomes a wife and mother.

The Stability of Marriage

586 587 582 In consequence, partly, of the scarcity value of wives, but more, no doubt, of the conflict of loyalties and interests which has to be overcome, marriage tends to be unstable in the initial stages. A young man rarely settles down permanently with his first bride, and young women generally treat their first marriage as an experiment unless the husband is a much older man to whom they have been married by formal negotiation. In the course of collecting census material I noted the marriages of over a hundred men. There is not one man over the age of 30, approximately (excluding a few physically or psychologically abnormal men), who has failed to experience one or more unsuccessful and usually short-lived marriages. Most men of 30 to 40 can give a history of five

[582] [1] I have no demographic evidence suggesting that there was formerly or is now a marked deficiency of marriageable women as compared with men in Taleland. My own crude demographic inquiries suggest a sex ratio of about unity among the Tallensi. Polygynous marriage, therefore, inevitably means competition for wives, even though women are usually married by the age of 16 or 17, as near as one can guess, and men rarely succeed in finding a wife before the age of about 25. The natives maintain that the age of marriage for girls has been decreasing rapidly since the coming of the white man (cf. my paper, 'A Note on Fertility among the Tallensi of the Gold Coast', *Sociological Review*, xxv, 1943, 3-4).

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

or six abortive—or rather, to translate the native attitude into our own terms, experimental—marriages. Men of over 50 say, with a laugh, that they cannot remember all the women they have married who left them after a short time. Women are more discreet about their marital history; but observation leads to the conclusion that between 50 and 60 per cent. of all married women have had more than one husband.[1]

A marriage breaks up either through the action of one of the spouses, generally the woman, or through that of the wife's guardian. The Tallensi have no formal procedure for divorce. If a man wishes to get rid of a wife (which happens very seldom) he generally does so by withholding the bride-price, so that her guardian eventually recalls her, or he makes her life so uncomfortable that she deserts him. If a woman decides to leave a husband, she simply absconds. She may do so because she dislikes him, or because he does not feed her well enough, or neglects her sexually or otherwise, or, natives say, out of mere caprice. All women, according to the men, are fickle and gullible; a plausible suitor can seduce any woman. So if a young wife goes to visit her parents and stays longer than two or three days, her husband, be he an ardent young man or a sober greybeard, hurries off to fetch her, usually in considerable dudgeon, for fear that she may be abducted by another man.

Despite these initial pitfalls of marriage, families do get established and remain stable. Though the idea of marriage as a lifelong and irrevocable bond does not exist among the Tallensi, many couples do settle down for life, and many other couples remain united for a long enough stretch of years to produce one or more children.

Many complicated circumstances have an influence on this. Naturally, the jural formalities must be properly complied with. That is to say,

[1] Many of these experimental marriages are not marriages at all, according to the strict letter of custom, since they are sometimes dissolved before placation gifts have been made and often before any instalment of the bride-price has been paid. Some last only a few weeks. But they are always called marriages; for it is a fact that many marriages that begin in exactly this way do turn out to be stable in the end. Counting as 'wives' only those for whom bride-price was paid and who bore children to their husbands, I found, among a randomly chosen group of 20 men over 45, approximately, that only 2 had had 1 wife each; only 3 had had 2 wives each; the remaining 15 (= 75 per cent.) had all had more than 2 wives each. Altogether, these 20 men had had 71 wives (average 3·5 wives each); they had lost 21 (average 1 each) by death; and at the time of the census they had 45 wives (average 2·25 each). But most of them claimed to have 'married' from 10 to 20 times and were able to give a fairly complete history of these abortive 'marriages'.

Among a randomly chosen group of 20 women of child-bearing age—who were therefore not yet at the end of their matrimonial careers—6 (= 30 per cent.) had had only one husband each; 7 (= 35 per cent.) had had only 2 husbands each; the remaining 7 (= 35 per cent.) had had more than 2 husbands each, 4 of them having had more than 3 husbands each. Apart from the propensity to choose a final husband by trial and error, the custom of the levirate helps to increase the number of husbands a woman may have in her lifetime.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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581 the bridegroom's guardian must send the placation gift (*lu sendaan*)
583 to the bride's guardian, and must pay a proportion of the bride-price
[586] acceptable to the latter. A wife is usually espoused (*sol*) by paying the bride-price of four head of cattle or their equivalent in instalments over a number of years. If he does not fulfil these jural requirements, a man has no rights to and over his wife. On the other hand, women frequently desert husbands who have paid a part or, occasionally, even the whole bride-price. In such a case an honourable man may feel bound to compel his daughter to return to her husband, but if the girl refuses obstinately he may have to yield to her. Often, however, a father prefers his daughter to find another husband from whom he claims the bride-price that has to be refunded to the first husband. And it is not uncommon for men to instigate a daughter to leave her lawful husband for another man, or to take a daughter away from her husband and give her to another man as a means of raising what we should call ready cash or its equivalent—for instance, a cow to repay a pressing debt, or to buy grain for the household. Thus, observance of the jural proprieties gives a husband a weapon with which he can try to assert his rights to and over his wife. It does not give him an absolute guarantee of these rights nor does it ensure the stability of the marriage.

582 A girl's parents, and especially her father, can make or mar a marriage.
593 Young people may wed without their fathers' consent, but they cannot remain legitimately married without it. If a man objects to a son-in-law he usually succeeds in exercising his right to take his daughter away, though cases are numerous in which the woman has persistently returned to the rejected husband, who has had to be accepted in the end. By contrast, if a father has himself chosen or likes his daughter's husband, he is a strong ally. He can force the girl, beating her if necessary, to stay with her husband, though here again fathers have been known to fail with obdurate daughters. Generally, however, the strength of
[789] paternal authority makes a father's command irresistible; for he might curse an intractable daughter, and this is greatly dreaded.

583 Again, a woman will not stay with a husband who does not pay at
691 least a portion of the bride-price. It is an insult to her, placing her on the level of a casual lover and exposing her to the taunts of her co-wives of the lineage. Pukiehat's wife was taken from him five times because he could not pay anything towards her bride-price; every time she came back. At length her guardian brought a case against Pukiehat. The chief put it to her that Pukiehat was, in effect, treating both her and her guardian with contempt. Sadly she admitted this and agreed to leave him if he did not meet the debt at once. Pukiehat saw he was in danger of losing his wife. He was a poor man; but he set to work energetically and managed to raise the equivalent of two cows, which was enough to satisfy his father-in-law.

586 Even a fruitful marriage, the strongest of all bonds between husband

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

and wife, may suffer shipwreck. Many women leave a husband or are taken from him after bearing one child to him. Only after a woman has borne two or three living children to a man does this bond become a really effective force in maintaining the marriage.

The real foundation of a lasting marriage is not custom or jural or ritual sanctions, but a satisfactory relationship between the married pair; and this is a complex tissue woven of many strands, changing and strengthening with the years. It has elements that can be translated into terms of reciprocal rights, duties, and services. But it is essentially a moral and personal bond, a question of the mutual adjustment of roles and persons in pursuit of the interests married partners have in one another and in common, and the purposes they share. The sexual bond is of vital importance in this relationship.

The personality of a spouse is important. A lazy man who neglects to provide for his wife sufficiently, a harsh man who strikes her at the least provocation, a man who through sickness, impotence, or lack of consideration does not or will not give her sexual satisfaction, yet holds her jealously to her marital fidelity; any such man may find it hard to keep a wife. A lazy woman, a disobedient woman, a woman with a hasty temper or one who is a confirmed gadabout, is likely to have several husbands before she finally settles down. A barren woman, too, with her growing sense of frustration as the years pass, tends to become restless and to drift from husband to husband. Such a one is Gelima, Naabdiya's elderly sister, who has tried no fewer than eighteen husbands and has been compelled to seek a haven for her declining years in her brother's home. Barrenness is one of the reasons for which a man may decide to get rid of a wife, but often enough a barren wife who is a good worker and has a tractable disposition gains her husband's devotion and remains with him. Occasionally a wife proves to be a petty thief, who filches the supplies of other women of the household or stores put aside by the men. She will get short shrift, and will be sent back in disgrace, formally, by the head of her husband's *dug*; for such a person is bound to cause endless disturbance in the family. A woman accused of witchcraft by a co-wife may be dealt with similarly, it is said, but in the few cases I have heard of the husbands have not divorced the women. Lastly, no man will tolerate a wife who suffers from nocturnal enuresis, however attractive or proficient she may be. To urinate on the sleeping-mat during sleep is a grave mystical offence endangering the life of the husband; hence, a woman suffering from this complaint is formally sent back to her parents.

The Wife's Ties with Her Paternal Family and Lineage

These accidents of personality affect only a minority of marriages. The constant social factors that steer the course of every marriage are of greater significance to us, and must be examined more fully. When

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

We have previously said that the Tallensi have no institutionalized procedure for divorce. This needs to be qualified. A very drastic procedure to which we have referred in our earlier book[1] exists by which a man can get rid of an objectionable wife. It is usually described as 'blowing (on)' (*pɛbh*) a wife, for it consists in the man's blowing ashes over his wife. By this action he expels her utterly from his house with all her brood. He casts her off and disowns her children; and he forfeits the bride-price. Everybody knows of this custom, and it is held to be entirely licit for any husband. The origins of attached lineages[2] are often attributed to clan sisters who were allegedly divorced in this way. But it is impossible to get a record of a single case that has occurred within the last forty or fifty years, or, indeed, within living memory. Though natives say that a man could, if he wished, 'blow on' his wife if she angered him continuously, or if she were dissolute, or were objectionable in any way, in fact her delinquencies would have to be of so grave a nature as to imperil his life and the welfare of the family for a man to cut through his marriage ties irrevocably at such enormous sacrifice.

The example of such a misdemeanour always quoted is concerned with their sexual relations. It is a taboo (*kihər*) for a woman to deny her husband's sexual rights over her. She would do so, by implication, if she were to kick him over in the act of coitus.[3] This is a sin of such gravity that the marriage must be dissolved at once or else disaster will come upon both partners. For it means that husband and wife have fallen out so badly with each other that they have come into sexual conflict.

This is implied, also, in a more symbolic way, if the disagreements between husband and wife come to a head in her attacking him with her stirring-stick (*vugər*) and his retaliating with his bow (*tap*). The stirring-stick, an indispensable implement for cooking porridge, is one of the emblems of femininity, and the bow, the principal weapon of the chase and of warfare, the chief emblem of manhood in Tale custom and ritual. Men are by convention excluded from the kitchen; women, both by convention and by ritual injunction, from the chase, and from contact with its magical and mechanical appurtenances when they are being used for hunting. One of the very rare occasions on which sexual continence is ritually enjoined on men is when they are poisoning arrows for hunting or war. Thus, a fight between husband and wife with bow and stirring-stick is a fight in terms of their opposed sexuality, a repudiation of the fundamental bond of marriage. It is a sin, and the couple will die if they do not immediately sever their marital relationship completely.

[1] *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. iv. [2] Ibid., p. 51.

[3] The point lies in the postures adopted by the Tallensi in coitus. As in many other primitive cultures, the woman lies on her back, and the man squats on his haunches between her thighs. She can, therefore, easily push him over with a kick, the natives say.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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Tallensi speak of these two sins against the marriage bond with genuine horror. During my second tour in Taleland, Maankye and his wife died within a few days of each other. Men of the family told me that this was the retribution justly visited on them for having fought with stirring-stick and bow but refusing to part. Such breaches of the marital bond might conceivably provoke a man to 'blow on' his wife, but I have never heard of an actual case. More probably she would be handed over to the lineage elders, to be sent back by them to her father.

Incidentally, the prohibition against keeping a wife who wets the sleeping-mat at night obviously belongs to this class of offences against the marriage bond, though, being involuntary, it is less heinous than the others. The real mystical danger to the husband is that a black ant might crawl through the woman's urine and then sting him. To disgust at the physical fouling of the nuptial bed in this infantile manner, so out of keeping with adulthood, is added fear of the magical consequences of the sexual maladjustment represented by the condition. But here again, in the few cases I know of, the woman was returned to her father through the elders of the husband's lineage.

It should be added that a wife's refusal to allow her husband to have coitus with her on a particular occasion is not regarded as a denial of his rights. This is one of the ways in which a woman gets her own back if she is vexed with her husband. And it would be very uncouth for the man to try to force her to yield to him. 'He coaxes her, until she at last gives him the vagina (*zaŋ pɛn tiu*)', my men friends told me.

The Sexual Rights of the Husband and the Corporate Interests of his Clan

A man has exclusive sexual rights over his wife, as we have said. If any other man has relations with her this is either incestuous or adulterous, and a serious wrong against the husband himself and his effective minimal lineage, section, or clan, according to the structural relations of the husband's and the seducer's effective minimal lineage, section, or clan.

To appreciate the significance of this we must recollect that a woman marries an individual, but marries *into* a lineage and clan. Men, and even women and children, of a clan or lineage speak of the wives of its members as 'our wives (*ti pɔɣaba*)'. If a man sees the wife of a clansman trying to sneak away in flight from her husband, he will take it on himself to bring her back home by force if necessary. If a man's wife is seduced or abducted by a member of another clan, any of his clansmen will take reprisals, if they get a chance, by seducing or abducting the wife of a member of the offending clan. There were many fights in the old days, as we have learnt, between clans because the wife of one clan was abducted by a member of the other.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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(*Pa m-biiga? Nyɔn ni i tau n-kab dɔya bii, pa nyɔnmi biig n-a u?*)'. As will be remembered, men quote the same maxim when they are asked why mother's brother and sister's son are generally so attached to each other. In support of this Tallensi usually quote two customs. Firstly, when an old woman dies, the oldest of her brothers' sons has his head shaved in mourning, as if for his father. He represents all his siblings, Tallensi say, in this act of filial respect. Secondly, a *ba-pɔk* has the power of pronouncing a curse against a child of her brother. She can, conversely, withdraw a curse pronounced by her brother if he dies without having done so, and if he has no surviving brother of the same nuclear lineage. But the social equivalence of a woman with her brother in relation to his children is limited by her sex. She is barred from exercising the jural and ritual authority and the rights of a father. In fact, the tendency is for her to look up to her brother's son as the future heir of her brother and the potential repository of authority in the affairs of her lineage.

Two examples will suffice to show how limited in fact are the jural rights a woman has in relation to her brother's children. They have principally a token value. When a funeral is being celebrated by a woman's husband's nuclear lineage her close lineage kin send a party of mourners to bear their condolences to the lineage of their lineage-in-laws. The party includes a number of young girls whom the woman calls her sisters and daughters. Before they leave again for home these young girls are gathered together and surrounded by a crowd of young men of the host clan. Amid laughter and good-humoured teasing the girls are invited to choose a 'future husband' each from among the young men. It is all a game, part of the hospitality accorded to the visitors. The selected 'husband' has to give a parting gift to the girl who has chosen him, so that she shall go home pleased with her visit. Among these girls might be a daughter of one of the woman's brothers of the same nuclear lineage. If the woman is particularly interested in the young man this girl selects, she may declare publicly that she is giving him the girl as his wife. Everybody pretends to accept this declaration as if it came from the girl's father, but in fact everybody knows that it has only a token significance and no jural force whatever.

Again, if a woman deserts a husband to whom she has been given by her father without having previously arranged to go to another man, she very often takes refuge with a *ba-pɔk*. There she is, so to speak, under a parent's protection but not subject to her father's authority. She knows that her *ba-pɔk* will sympathize with her and cannot in any case force her to return to the man she has left. Her father, satisfied that she is in parental care, will not seek to put pressure on her, at least for some time. However, a girl in this position soon attracts suitors, though courtship has to be clandestine, for she is still formally the wife of another man. But sometimes a suitor succeeds in ingratiating himself with the *ba-pɔk* and persuades her to connive at an elopement, a thing

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which a father would never do. In theory, this means that the *ba-pɔk* consents to the new marriage. In practice, her action has no binding force on her brother. This rule applies also to an unmarried girl who is given in marriage by her *ba-pɔk*. A woman might have one of her brother's daughters living with her as a nursemaid for her baby. She might promise the girl as a wife to one of her husband's brothers. But her brother need not consider himself bound by this promise if he has objections to the marriage.

A father's sister is, in short, a kind of female 'father', but without the jural and ritual attributes of fatherhood. A father's sister must be treated with respect. It would be grossly improper, for example, to joke with her as one jokes with a wife's sister; and to strike or abuse her, even if she were much younger than oneself, would be a sin. But the respect accorded to her is only a pale reflection of the attitude implicit in filial piety. It is much more a matter of etiquette than of emotion, as if it were merely conventional and not evoked by a feeling of moral obligation.

A marked characteristic of a person's relations with his or her father's sister is the absence of specific mutual obligations. Just as a *ba-pɔk* has in reality no rights over her brother's children, so she has no specific duties of either a ritual or a secular kind towards them, or they to her. This is the chief contrast between this relationship and that of parent and child or that of mother's brother and sister's child. Only a shadow of a ritual sanction comes into the relationship, in the form of the belief that the curse of a *ba-pɔk* can harm her brother's child, and in the notion that she stands under the protection of the same ancestors as the latter. Hence, though she cannot demand services from her brother's child, it is felt that a request for help from her should be met, even at the cost of some inconvenience. If a person offends his father's sister and she reproaches him saying, 'I bore you (identifying herself with her brother) and this is how you treat me. My ancestors have seen it, my fathers have seen it (*Man dɔŋi la k-i cŋɔm lá ŋwala; n-yaanam nyeya, m-banam nyeya*)', this has the force of a curse because she is invoking her ancestors who are also his ancestors. Such a curse would disturb a native, but not nearly so deeply as a father's curse or if a mother's brother refused to sacrifice on his behalf.

Because their relationship is devoid of a definite jural coefficient and is not subject to organized ritual sanctions; because, also, a father's sister stands outside the scheme of economic and domestic associations in which the relationship of parent and child is set, the relations of father's sister and brother's child are free of the undercurrent of tension found in those of father and child. A woman's bonds with her brother's children are fundamentally bonds of sentiment. That is why they seldom endure beyond one generation, or extend beyond the nuclear lineage.

The personal relations of father's sister and brother's child have much